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A street by any other name is just as sweet

Some roads named in a person's honour are well thought out; other choices come into question

Searching title to a local condominium townhouse last month, I was surprised and pleased to discover a Toronto street name that was completely new to me. Joe Shuster Way is in the King West Village area, north and east of King and Dufferin Sts.

Joe Shuster (1914-1992) was a native Torontonian and is best known as the co-creator of Superman, one of the most famous and commercially successful fictional characters of the 20th century.

His family lived nearby in the area of Bathurst and College Sts. before moving to Cleveland for business reasons.

As a youngster, Shuster worked as a newspaper boy for the *Toronto Daily Star*. When Superman first appeared in 1938, his alter ego, Clark Kent, worked for the Daily Planet, modelled after this newspaper. Toronto was the inspiration for Metropolis, Superman's home city.

In another tribute to the artist, the Joe Shuster Awards were named in his honour and are presented annually to honour achievements in the field of Canadian comic book publishing.

Credit for naming Joe Shuster Way goes to Toronto developer Urbancorp, which transformed the old Massey Ferguson lands into a thriving neighbourhood, now home to 1,400 people.

Urbancorp also gets credit for naming two streets that intersect with Joe Shuster Way. Laidlaw St. is named after George Laidlaw, promoter of the Credit Valley Railway in 1879. The Toronto terminus of the railway was at the corner of King and Dufferin.

Since 2000, the naming or renaming of Toronto streets has been governed by the City of Toronto Street Naming Policy. Under its guidelines, streets should generally be named after people, places, events and things related to the city and citizens of Toronto.

Names should honour and commemorate noteworthy people associated with the city, or to mark local history, places events or culture. They may also strengthen neighbourhood identity, recognize native wildlife, flora, fauna or natural features, or celebrate communities that contribute to the city's ethnic and racial diversity.

The city's street-naming policy has been remarkably successful in following these objectives in recent years, both before and after the new guidelines were introduced.

The St. Lawrence neighbourhood, for example, has streets named after historical figures such as runner Thomas Longboat, artist Albert Franck, early fur trader Capt. Alexandre Douville, French settler Chevalier de Portneuf, architect Henry (Bowyer) Lane, and historian Henry Scadding.

Occasionally, however, the street-naming policy has been an abysmal failure. Despite the fact that the policy says that "names of living persons should only be used in exceptional circumstances," Mike Myers Dr. was named in 2002 after the actor who grew up in Scarborough. That street will forever immortalize the star of the *Wayne's World* movies, the *Austin Powers* films, and the memorable (gag!) *So I Married an Axe Murderer*.

Better choices for street names can readily be found on the sidewalks of King and Simcoe Sts. in the theatre district. There, Canada's Walk of Fame features bronze stars with names of dozens of notable Canadians who have excelled in music, sport, film, television, science and innovation, as well as the literary, visual and performing arts.

My own favourite name on that sidewalk is Frank Shuster, cousin of the creator of Superman. Shuster was one-half of the comedy duo of Wayne and Shuster, whose TV appearances on CBC comedy specials and *The Ed Sullivan Show* entertained millions around the world.

For many years, my wife Dorothy and I have lived in the Toronto house Frank Shuster built in 1951 and lived in for 19 years during the height of his popularity. We especially enjoy watching reruns of his old TV shows in the house where the scripts were written.

If anyone out there is listening, my nomination for the next new Toronto street name is Wayne and Shuster Dr.